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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 377

Witness

Mr. Peadar O'Mara,
16 Donore Road,
South Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of 3rd Battalion Dublin Brigade
Irish Volunteers 1916;

Captain 3rd Battalion Dublin Brigade
I.R.A. 1920-1921.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1912-1916;
- (b) Funeral of O'Donovan Rossa;
- (c) Beggars Bush - Boland's Bakery
Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.578

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

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Statement by Peadar O'Mara,

16 Donore Road, South Circular Road, Dublin.

I was enrolled in An Chead Sluagh of the Fianna in late 1912 in 34 Camden Street. Amongst the officers I met there were, Con Colbert, Seán Heuston, Pádraig Ó Riain, Barney Mellows.

Meetings were held twice a week, with marches or exercises carried out on Sundays. The subjects taught on week nights included, Irish history, Irish language, foot drill, arms drill with hurleys or broom sticks, first aid and signalling. Games were also encouraged, such as hurling.

Occasionally in the summer months route marches and exercises were carried out from Camden Street and the various sluagh halls to Belcamp, Raheny, where Madam Markievicz had a house and an estate. Exercises usually terminated with a high tea at which plenty of home-made jam was supplied.

My association with the Fianna continued until August 1914, when I was transferred to the 4th Battalion, Irish Volunteers, whose Headquarters were at Larkfield, Kimmage. I was posted to "C" Company of this Battalion. The Company Captain was Thomas MacCarthy, brother of Dan MacCarthy. One of the other officers in the Company

was a Lieutenant Wilsie Byrne. Among the Battalion officers and staff were - Battalion Commandant, Eamon Ceannt; Captain, George Irvine; Captain, Seumas Murphy; Lieutenant, Liam Cosgrave and his brother Phil Cosgrave.

Battalion activities consisted of route marches and tactical exercises carried out in the area from Rathfarnham, Rockbrook, Pine Forest, Lamb Doyle's, Ticknock, Sandyford, Dundrum. Company activities consisted of one nightly parade each week in Larkfield, route marches and exercises on Sundays, if not engaged on Battalion exercises. The subjects taught were, musketry, arms drill, foot drill, signalling and first aid. These were carried out by the officers.

On Company parade nights, subscriptions would be collected and also collections for the Arms Fund. Tentative mobilisation orders would be issued by the Company Commander for the following week, specifying approximate time of mobilisation, place of mobilisation, equipment and arms to be carried. Equipment usually consisted of a pack, haversack, water bottle, bandolier, belt and arms (if any) to be carried. The contents of the pack were to include overcoat, spare pair of boots, socks, towel, soap, twenty-four hours' rations, bundle of kindling wood, mess tin, etc. During tactical exercises individuals and squads were responsible for their own cooking arrangements.

The normal activities of the Battalion and attached Companies continued until when what is known as the

'Split' occurred among the Volunteers. When the 'Split' occurred a general mobilisation of the Battalion for Larkfield, Kimmage, was ordered, and the situation was explained to the personnel by the Battalion Commandant, Eamon Ceannt. As far as I can remember, he explained the political situation which he stated was occasioned by the fact that Mr. John Redmond desired to have the controlling interest in the movement which was diametrically opposed to the aims and objects of the Volunteer Executive. He explained to us that it appeared to be Mr. Redmond's intention to have the Volunteers drafted to the British Army for the purpose of fighting a battle which did not include a battle to fight for the freedom of Ireland. At the conclusion of his address the Battalion Commandant requested those who were remaining loyal to the principle of the Volunteer Executive to stand fast and that those who could not see eye to eye with their principles were requested to leave the Battalion, and that there would be no hard feelings, that it was a matter of principle.

The Battalion then reformed and were marched to the Volunteer Headquarters which was situated at 41 Kildare Street, where they were addressed and congratulated and thanked by some officer of the Executive, I think it was The O'Rahilly. About two-thirds of the Battalion demonstrated their loyalty to the Volunteer Executive, but the numbers attending parades continued to dwindle during the next few weeks until the Companies in the Battalion were reduced to about fifty per cent of their original strength.

From this date onwards the training and arming of the Battalion was carried out in a more rigorous manner, and not only were the exercises carried out in the county but night marches during the weeks were carried out around different areas in the city. Saturday night camps were often held at Battalion Headquarters. Invariable musical and vocal items were rendered, including selections of Irish airs on the Uilleann pipes by Eamon Ceannt.

Firing on a miniature range was carried out in Larkfield and ball ammunition was fired in the Hollow, Dolphin's Barn. Ammunition was supplied by the Quartermasters on payment of a nominal sum per five rounds.

A sort of an intensive recruiting campaign for the I.R.B. took place immediately after the 'Split'. I was approached by Seumas O'Kelly, a section commander in my company (since deceased), who lived in Donore Avenue, and who was one of the recruiting agents in the 4th Battalion, to join. I was sworn in at the Forester's Hall, Parnell Square.

The activities of the Circle were carried on under the guise of a football club. The business transacted at those meetings usually consisted of a report of the activities of the various Volunteer units of which the members belonged. Information concerning the activities of other units was freely discussed. Subscriptions to the Arms Fund were also collected. My Martini rifle which was supplied by this organisation cost me the sum of fifty shillings. It was supplied to me by section commander Seumas O'Kelly from his home

in Donore Avenue.

In or about Easter, 1915, there was what I considered to be the First Flying Column organised in the Dublin Brigade. This Flying Column consisted of Volunteers from all units of the Brigade who were asked to hold themselves in readiness for a test mobilisation which would cover a period of from six o'clock on a Saturday evening to six o'clock on the Monday evening.

The mobilisation took place at six o'clock p.m. at Rathfarnham willage on Easter Saturday, 1915. The officer in charge was Lieutenant Liam Clarke of St. Enda's Company (E. Company, 4th Battalion). The equipment carried was full marching order with forty-eight hours' rations; revolvers to be carried but no rifles nor side arms. The parade was checked and approximately 120 were found present. We were informed that the first part of the exercise was to consist of a night march, and we were warned to check over our equipment and to make things comfortable.

Amongst the Volunteers I noticed present at the mobilisation were, Volunteers Christie and Paddy Byrne, Seumas Kavanagh, Jim Pender and Seán Hayes of the 3rd Battalion; C. O'Grady of the 4th; Garry Holohan, Seán Heuston, Larry Riordan of the 2nd Battalion.

The march started at six o'clock and the route covered - Ballyboden, Pine Forest, Featherbed Mountains to Glencree. The Brothers in Glencree provided us with a very refreshing cup of tea. Quite a number of the

Volunteers who were under the impression that this was going to be the bivouac for the night, started to make themselves comfortable by removing their equipment and part of their wearing apparel preparatory to retiring for the night, but they were rudely disturbed by Lieutenant Liam Clarke blowing his whistle and ordering the Column to fall in as quickly as possible, that the bivouac was to be in a place called Cronie Byrne's Wood near Rathfrilandham m.

The march was resumed and the bivouac was reached by Lough Tay and Lough Dan where the Column bivouaced for the night. As far as I could see in the half light this seemed to be a welcome relief for the major portion of the members of the Column who just merely threw themselves down in all sorts of postures and positions to a well earned rest, but rest there was none, as each individual had to provide his own cooking.

The weather during the first portion of the march was wild and stormy with occasional heavy showers. This in my opinion, might account for the weariness of the Column on its arrival at bivouac.

Sunday morning after breakfast the Column paraded for Divine Service and assisted at same by the singing of the hymns in church. An instance of the condition of some of the members was occasioned by what I noticed at Mass: I heard a scuffle and looked round and I saw a Volunteer assisted by two others to keep him in an upright position as he was helping himself to some liquid from a water bottle. I took particular notice of this Volunteer and he, along with some others who were not in

good shape, were permitted to leave the Column at Rathdrum and to return to Dublin by train on Easter Sunday.

At about two o'clock on Sunday, after a meal which was prepared by the individual members of the Column, the march was resumed via Glensaly, Rathnew, Ashford, Newcastle to the Glen of the Downes, where the Column bivouaced for the night.

During the march from Rathdrum to the Glen of the Downes the Column was cheered on by special train-loads of Volunteers who were proceeding to the Phoenix Park, Dublin, to be reviewed by Mr. John Redmond.

The march was resumed on Monday morning via Bray, Cornel's Court, Loughlinstown, Stillorgan, Donnybrook, Stephen's Green North, Grafton Street, and was halted and dismissed at the Parnell Monument at six o'clock p.m. on Monday evening, having travelled over sixty miles.

No incident of note occurred during this portion of the march except that several heavy showers fell on us. The outstanding personality of this march, whom I never had the pleasure to meet, was a piper who cheered us over the Featherbed Mountains in the initial stages of the march by playing national airs upon his pipes.

I was a member of the Guard of Honour at the lying-in-state in the City Hall of O'Donovan Rossa.

The funeral to Glasnevin was the occasion of a general mobilisation of the Dublin Brigade to pay a last tribute to this unrepentant Fenian.

About the end of December, 1915, or early January, 1916, a Camp was established at Larkfield to accommodate a certain number of Irishmen who were living and in employment in England but who refused to be conscripted for the British Army. The local units of the 4th Battalion had to furnish the necessary guards for this Camp while it was in existence. Those guards were armed and their instructions were that no unauthorised persons were permitted to enter the premises. This Camp was under the observation of the D.M.P.

Early in 1916 I was transferred from the 4th Battalion to the 3rd Battalion, with a number of Volunteers who were in the Companies in the various Battalions who were now being transferred to units nearest their home address; this was not insisted upon. I was posted to "A" Company, 3rd Battalion. The Company officers were - Captain Joe O'Connor, Lieutenant Tim Finn, Lieutenant John Guilfoyle. The Battalion Commandant was Éamon de Valera. The Battalion Vice-Commandant was Seán Fitzgibbon (since deceased). The Quartermaster was James Byrne. The Company Adjutant of "A" Company was Seán Murphy who lived in Clanbrassil Street.

"A" Company was organised in the following manner, and this organisation seemed to be general throughout the Battalion. The Company was divided into half

Companies; they were divided into sections, and the sections were divided into squads, and to facilitate the mobilisation of a unit, the officers, section commanders and squad commanders were augmented by individuals who were known as mobilisers. These mobilisers usually consisted of an old member of the unit who lived in an area where there was one or more members of his Company which did not include an officer, section commander or a squad commander. One of the Company runners was Volunteer H. Banks. Company runners usually lived adjacent to the Company Commanders and were employed by him for the purpose of taking mobilisation orders out to the responsible members of his unit who were responsible for the mobilisation.

The runners sub-divided up the area to be mobilised and each of them took dispatches to the mobilisers in their areas with instructions to hand the dispatch personally to the person so addressed or to leave it at his home address, and on completion of his task was to report back to the Company Commander as to whether the dispatch had been delivered personally or to his home address. Test mobilisations were carried out to test the efficiency of this system.

The training carried out in the 3rd Battalion was similar to that carried out in the 4th Battalion, which I think, was similar throughout the whole Brigade, with the following exception. More attention was paid at this particular time to making the men proficient on the

rifle range. There was a rifle range at Battalion Headquarters which was situated at Camden Row.

Volunteer Headquarters was situated at No.2 Dawson Street. Night classes were held every night with the exception of Saturday and Sunday nights and lectures were delivered on the following subjects - field craft, first aid, signalling, street fighting, musketry, hygiene and sanitation and elementary tactics. Amongst those who lectured were, J.J. O'Connell (Ginger) (deceased), Eimer O'Duffy, Barney Mellows, Con Colbert, James Connolly, _____ Meldon, The O'Rahilly and Thomas MacDonagh.

The advantages of training left-handed men for street fighting was particularly stressed. Personnel attending those lectures were expected to be capable of lecturing their units on night parades on the subjects which they were studying. In or about this time I became the proud possessor of a Lee Enfield rifle which was stolen from the guard room in Marlboro Barracks, Blackhall Lane. This rifle was stolen from the guard room by a Posts & Telegraphs boy messenger who was delivering telegrams to the Officers' Mess and who took a rifle out of the rifle rack, put it under his waterproof cape and delivered it to my home that evening. He was rewarded with the sum of one pound.

On the next Company parade in Camden Row I sold my Martini to "A" Company for the sum of fifty shillings. The Company Commander, Joe O'Connor, requested information as to how I had secured my Lee Enfield rifle. This information I refused to give him. As I was attending musketry lectures in No.2 Dawson Street, I was permitted to fire my Lee Enfield rifle on the rifle range at Camden Row. The results were considered satisfactory, and I was

promoted to the rank of Company Musketry Instructor.

With the exception of normal weekly and week-end training, no outstanding event took place in the early portion of 1916 until the St. Patrick's Day Parade when the Dublin Brigade was inspected and reviewed by members of the Volunteer Executive under the leadership of Professor Eoin MacNeill.

From March, 1916, until the Rising took place, training and equipping of the various units were carried on with a great amount of care and attention, and the feeling got around amongst us that something was in the air which we could not really put our hands on. Those of us who were members of the I.R.B. had gathered from what was discussed at our meeting that it was the intention to have a successful insurrection or a fight take place before the European War concluded. My own opinion was that if this did not take place during the difficult time through which the British were passing, that our hopes of staging a successful insurrection at the conclusion of hostilities in Europe would be vain. This air of expectancy carried us on up to Holy Week, and on Holy Thursday I was ordered to parade to Seán Murphy's house in Clanbrassil Street, to receive specific instructions.

When I reported to him I found that there were quite a number of Volunteers, whom I knew, present, and being of a curious disposition I asked what we were there for, and I was informed that we were to be introduced as members of the I.R.B. to the Battalion Commandant and to our own Company Commanders.

At this meeting we got definite instructions to hold ourselves in readiness for stirring events that were to take place in the very near future. Those instructions, to the best of my recollection, were given to us, firstly by Seán Murphy and secondly, by Éamon de Valera. The general feeling at the meeting was one of keen anticipation.

On Easter Sunday morning about 9 o'clock I was mobilised to parade at Camden Row, and whilst preparing myself and my equipment to proceed to Camden Row a further runner arrived, I think Tommy Byrne, to say the mobilisation was cancelled. A perusal of the Sunday papers later gave me to understand that the mobilisation was cancelled for the reasons so stated to the Press by Professor Eoin McNeill who was President of the Volunteer Executive.

I spent the remainder of the Sunday preparing to collect a number of artists and friends who were to participate at a concert to be held in the Forester's Hall, Parnell Square, that night in aid of the Company Arms' Fund. The concert was duly held and at the interval between the first and second half of the programme the Battalion Commandant, Éamon de Valera, arrived and delivered a speech in which he explained to the audience the reason for the letters in the Sunday press over the signature of Professor McNeill. He stated that he was sorry that such a thing had happened, that he was expecting us to be with him in the Dublin Mountains. This gave me the impression that the mobilisation which had been cancelled on the Sunday morning was the mobilisation which was to have been the start of the expected insurrection. The concert passed off peacefully; the audience and the personnel engaged dispersed

to their homes. On Monday morning I was instructed to parade with full equipment and forty-eight hours' rations at the corner of Earlsfort Terrace and Hatch Street. When I arrived there I found the Company Captain, Joe O'Connor, Lieutenant John Guilfoyle, Section Commander John Golden, and about twenty/twenty-five members of "A" Company, 3rd Battalion. Amongst the others present I noticed Lieutenant Simon Donnelly and some other members whom I was informed belonged to "C" Company. A check of ammunition and equipment was carried out by the officers and we were asked to state if we had carried with us all our arms and ammunition, and some who said they had left some of those articles behind were dispatched to their homes with instructions to take the arms and ammunition which they had left behind, to the point of mobilisation.

This small body of armed men were exciting the curiosity of a member of the D.M.P. Division who was on duty in the vicinity, and were also being observed with curiosity by church-goers who were passing up and down the thoroughfare. Consequently, we were instructed to conceal ourselves behind the hoarding that was erected around what is now University College, Dublin. We remained there until we were ordered to parade and march off about 11.15 a.m.

We proceeded via Hatch Street, Lower; Pembroke Street, Upper; Fitzwilliam Square, South; Fitzwilliam Square, East; Fitzwilliam Street, Lower; Merrion Square, East; Grand Canal Street to the railway bridge in Great Clarence Street (now Peadar Macken Street) where the Company was halted and there joined by some members of "C" Company.

Captain Joe O'Connor reported to the Battalion Commandant, Eamon de Valera, who was in Great Clarence Street. When he rejoined his Company he called for our attention and informed us that we were going into the fight, that the Republic was proclaimed and if any Volunteers wished to withdraw could do so. Two Volunteers withdrew, and after being disarmed were sent home. One Volunteer took a weakness and was assisted into a house. He rejoined his Company later.

"A" Company was ordered to force a gate leading into the D.S.E. Railway line and to proceed to the railway bridge at Bath Avenue and construct a trench, destroying the railway lines up to Lansdowne Road level crossing, and to establish an outpost there. A detachment in charge of Lieutenant S. Guilfoyle were detailed to effect an entrance into a terrace of houses on South Lotts Road from the railway line and to tunnel through the walls until they reached Horan's Provision Shop (this shop is now occupied by a Mr. Murphy), and place it in a state of defence. This shop commanded the gate of Beggars Bush Barracks and the buildings within; it also supplied a lot of necessities to the Volunteers.

The remainder of the Company was withdrawn to a railway fitting shed close to Barrow Street bridge where Company Headquarters was established. This shed and the yard in front which had an exit onto Grand Canal Street was put into a state of defence, an outpost being established on the roof. This outpost commanded the canal banks and Mount Street bridge. My first task was the demolishing of the railway. This consisted of knocking

out the wooden keys from the chairs, loosening the chairs from the sleepers and removing the fish plates.

The outpost consisting of the brothers Tom and Christy Byrne, established at Lansdowne Road level crossing, was engaged on similar work. Later on Monday I assisted at trench digging on the railway.

The trench at Bath Avenue was filled in on Monday evening and a new trench made at South Lotts road. During the construction of this trench the Battalion Commander arrived and inspected the defences. He found the trench not good enough as he was of the opinion that a bullet would go through the parapet and that it must be strengthened. During this inspection a party of military were observed approaching Beggars Bush along Haddington Road. They had almost reached the Barrack gate before the order to fire was given. This order was given by Commandant De Valera as follows: "There they are, come on, fire". We picked up our rifles which were leaning against the bridge and opened fire on them before they entered the Barracks. About twelve shots were fired. Those were the first shots fired from the railway.

This party of military were a detachment of G.Rs., a corps which had been formed for home defence in Ireland, and consisted of University students and business men. They had been on a route march in the county and were proceeding back to Barracks.

During the remainder of Monday evening, Beggars Bush was under fire from Horan's, the windows of which had been barricaded with sacks of sugar, built up from the floor,

great excitement, continuous heavy firing been heard all over the city.

Lieutenant Malone was killed in No. 25 Northumberland Road; Section Commander Reynolds and Volunteers Doyle and Murphy in Clanwilliam House; the British troops engaged being the Sherwood Foresters.

On Wednesday night the British attacked along the railway line. This attack was stopped at the trench at South Lotts Road, the enemy retreating leaving one dead N. C. O. behind, also one rifle. Volunteer Murphy was wounded in the chest; he recovered and was interned later in Frongoch Camp.

On Thursday the British attacked the Fitting Shop effecting an entrance into the yard in front. This attack was beaten off, Volunteer Casey being wounded. The British left three rifles behind; those rifles were used by Volunteers. Heavy firing was concentrated on our positions resulting in the wounding of Volunteer O'Reilly (Irish Citizen Army) who was on duty on the outpost on the roof of the Fitting Shop. He died later in Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. Volunteer Bracken, Company First Aid man, was wounded while on the railway line; he carried on after attention.

On Thursday morning the British N. C. O. was buried where he lay on the railway line. I reported this interment when I was being questioned by the British in Ballsbridge after the surrender. Horan's shop was subjected to heavy fire during the day causing the woodwork

to smoulder. This fire was returned, a machine gun being observed in a window in Beggars Bush Barracks. British soldiers were observed on the tower of Haddington Road Church (R. C.). Lieutenant Seán Guilfoyle informed me that he and Volunteer Tom Cassidy had fired on them in the same position on Wednesday.

For dinner we had a cheese stew, this being made by boiling cheese and potatoes and serving it out in new buckets, which gave it a taste of iron. As this unsavoury mess was cold when we received it, we had tea instead. Volunteers were beginning to feel the strain of constant firing and loss of sleep and were observed dosing in their positions.

With the exception of some sniping Saturday was quiet. A rumour was circulated that Germans had made a landing and were coming to our help. This was received with a good deal of comment as we were of the opinion that we would be better off without them.

On Saturday evening there was a noted lull in the firing from the centre of the city and a rumour was out that the G. P. O. and Commandant P. H. Pearse had surrendered. This rumour was laughed at; we were holding our own, so fight on. Nevertheless Saturday night was a night of alarms and uncertainties.

On Sunday morning all Volunteers were ordered to Bolands Bakery as orders had been received that we were to surrender. This order caused consternation and the utmost defection. We could not understand why this

should happen. Nevertheless we proceeded to Bolands. While on our way down the railway line Volunteer Byrne was wounded; he was assisted into Bolands and refused to go to hospital.

The excitement in Bolands was terrible. What did we want to surrender for? This was the main topic. Volunteers were shouting themselves hoarse, denouncing everyone who had surrendered; others were singing songs and some were openly crying. About 2 p.m. Commandant De Valera read out the despatch received from Commandant P.H. Pearse calling off the fight. He stated that he had seen a British officer and that we must surrender at once. Preceded by a Volunteer first aid man carrying a white flag, we marched out from Bolands into Great Clarence Street (now Peadar Macken Street) turned right into Grand Canal Street, then left into Grattan Street where we were ordered to ground arms and remove our equipment. We then marched into Mount Street where we were placed under escort and searched. Later we marched to Ballsbridge Show Grounds and were locked up in horse stalls.

On Sunday evening Captain O'Connor was taken from our stable and later on I was also removed. I was taken into a room where I found Captain O'Connor and two British officers. I was asked by one of those officers as to the numbers and dispositions of Volunteers on D.S.E. railway line. I refused to answer unless those questions were put by Captain O'Connor. He ordered me to answer as he had received instructions from Commandant de Valera to facilitate the British military.

I informed Captain O'Connor that the orders received on Sunday morning calling in the Volunteers from the railway line and Horan's shop had been carried out and that none were left behind; they were now prisoners. This seemed to satisfy the British officers and we were escorted back to our stable to the satisfaction of our fellow prisoners who had not expected to see us again. We, prisoners, received no food nor water during Sunday.

On Monday morning we were taken to a horse trough to wash and to perform other necessary ablutions. An issue of biscuits was given; a biscuit tin of water was placed in the stable.

On Tuesday evening the prisoners were paraded and marched to Richmond Barracks (Keogh Barracks) via Morehampton Road, Northumberland Road, Mount Street, Merrion Square North, Clare Street, Nassau Street, Grafton Street, College Green, Dame Street, Cork Hill, Lord Edward Street, Christchurch Place, High Street, Cornmarket, Thomas Street, James' Street, Mount Brown, Kilmainham, Emmet Road, Inchicore. On arrival at Richmond Barracks we were locked in barrack rooms for the night, the only furnishing being a urine bucket. No food nor water was issued in Richmond Barracks on Tuesday.

On Wednesday morning we were allowed to visit a latrine. We received an issue of tea, biscuits and bully beef. We also received tea that evening. We received a visit from D.M.P. Detectives who carefully examined us, asking for our names, addresses and occupations. We remained in Richmond Barracks until Friday, 5th May, when we were marched to the North Wall via Emmet Road,

Islandbridge, Conyngham Road, Parkgate Street and line of North Quays. We were placed on board a ship and deported to England.

The ship that took us to England was a B. & I. cattle boat normally used for carrying livestock. We were accommodated in the holds with the hatches off. The conditions during the crossing were anything but pleasant occasioned by the fact that there was a storm over land accompanied by heavy rain and heavy seas, and about ninety per cent of those confined in the hold were suffering from sickness. I was amongst the ninety per cent.

I have no recollection of what port we arrived at, but I was very pleased to be back on dry land. We were escorted to a railway terminus and placed in corridor carriages, sentries being posted on each door. Our journey was relieved by the singing of songs and the talking of experiences and we were very much cheered in spirits by one of our sentries who volunteered to take any letters we wished to write and have them posted for us. He supplied the writing material and any of us who had money gave it to him, but I am sorry to say that my letter did not arrive.

When we arrived at our destination which I later found to be Wakefield, Yorkshire, we were marched to the local prison where I was accommodated in "B" Wing and received the following number, 43. My number reading while I was there was B. 3/43. I occupied this cell and was afforded the same treatment as a convicted civilian prisoner with the following exception - I was not

relieved of my uniform - and any of our Volunteers in the party who were accommodated in Wakefield were treated in similar fashion.

The first meal I received in Wakefield Prison consisted of bully beef and biscuits which had been issued to us in Richmond Barracks, Dublin. Those commodities had been taken from us when we arrived in the prison the previous day. The only exercise afforded us was one hour's exercise a day which consisted of walking round a ring in a compound and we were not allowed to converse with other prisoners. Those conditions prevailed until a visit was paid to us by a high-ranking officer who stated that he had been sent down from the War Office to investigate the conditions under which we were living. He asked us to state to him any grievances that we had. This poor man was so overcome by the number of our complaints that he made a hasty retreat but he gave us an assurance that our complaints would be considered. Within a very short space of time nearly all restrictions as pertaining to civilian prisoners were removed. Parcels could be received; letters could be sent and visits could be arranged. Free association was permitted and no longer were we just merely walking round like dummies but we could talk, converse and exercise as we wished. Our Local Intelligence Officer in this prison was a Volunteer named James Mallin who in civilian life was a barber, and was now permitted to carry on his trade in this prison, but instead of the usual instruments for the purpose of shaving he was only permitted to trim the beards of the prisoners with hair-trimming machines. It was amusing to see the various types of moustaches,

side beards and whiskers that the prisoners were cultivating. Some of the stories that James would tell would be amusing as to how things were going on outside and the state of the war. But the most amusing of all that I can remember, took place on the day that we were informed that three British destroyers, the *Aubor*, *Creese* and *Haugh*, were torpedoed in the English Channel. This disaster was placed to our credit owing to the fact that it was the practice at a certain hour of night for all prisoners, whether locked up or not, to join in a community saying of the Rosary. This was one of the reasons attributed for this disaster.

One of the rumours circulated by James Mallin was the impending move of all prisoners to an internment camp. When pressed for details James said he did not know where the camp was but he heard that all Volunteers in uniform were to be stripped of their uniform and issued with civilian suits as issued to discharged prisoners.

As I was dressed in uniform I was at my wits end as to how I could have it saved and sent home. I explained my predicament to Volunteer Joseph Guilfoyle who introduced me to a young lady who was visiting the prisoners. I told her of my predicament and asked her could she get me anything in the nature of civilian clothes and if she could to bring them in to me as I intended to try to have my uniform sent home. The following day during visiting hours I was handed a parcel by this young lady, consisting of one trousers and one jacket. I changed from my uniform into those civilian clothes in a lavatory in the compound, parcelled up my uniform, gave it to the girl and it duly arrived

home at my home address.

Shortly afterwards we were transferred to Frongoch, North Wales, where we were accommodated in the lower camp which was a disused distillery. The only person that I knew among the party of prisoners who had arrived before us, was the late Lieutenant-General J.J. O'Connell (Ginger). I was surprised to see him because I knew he was a much wanted man, and to ensure that I committed no indiscretion I asked him whom he was there as, and he informed me he was there as Ginger O'Connell. He was later removed to Reading Jail.

Before Lieutenant-General O'Connell was removed to Reading Jail he and I had many discussions as to the conduct of the insurrection in Ireland and he informed me that the general plan consisted of the uprising of all Volunteer Units throughout the country with the intention of temporarily holding the principal cities and towns as delaying action to permit the country to be organised for what is now known as guerilla tactics. This plan could not be put into execution because the uprising was not general throughout the country.

Some time after arrival in Frongoch parties were being sent down to London to be interviewed by an Interview Board. This necessitated a long train journey from Frongoch to London. The party that I was with, was accommodated in Wormwood Scrubbs. The most amusing incident during my stay in Wormwood Scrubbs was when Seán O'Mahony (Big Seán) (also known as comrade) handed me two cigarettes and one match. I said, "what's the use of

one match and two cigarettes?". He said, "split it and make sure to send the smoke out through the ventilator!" To do this one had to lie on the cell floor and puff the smoke into the ventilator which was set into the wall close to the floor.

The Interview Board consisted of three members, of which the Chairman was Lord Sankey, and was carried out under the Question and Answer system. The only questions I was asked were, my name and address; was I a Volunteer; if I had been served with an internment order and if I considered that I was a fit person to be served with such order. To the best of my recollection I answered all those questions in the affirmative. After a period when all the party had been interviewed we were returned to Frongoch.

After my return from Wormwood Scrubbs I became ill and the Camp Doctor diagnosed my complaint as erysipelas. I was removed to the Camp Hospital where I was kept for about five days when I received notification that I was to pack my belongings, that I was being sent home to Dublin. This would be about late August or early September, 1916. The party of which I was amongst, was sent by train from Frongoch to Holyhead, and from Holyhead by mail boat to Dún Laoghaire and thence by train to Westland Row.

SIGNED

Patrick Ollara

DATE

17-4-50

WITNESS

Sean Brennan. Esq. M.D.

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